



Rhode Island Judicial, Professional And Technical Employees' Local Union 808

September 29, 2020

Representative Marvin L. Abney (District 73, Middletown, Newport)
Chairman, House Committee on Finance,
House Committee on Conduct, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
12 Summer Street
Newport, RI 02840

Dear Chairman Abney,

My name is Karen Hazard. I am the Union Representative for Laborers' Local Union 808 of the Laborers' International Union of North America. I represent approximately 250 of the hard working public sector members at the Eleanor Slater Hospital Zambarano Unit, from certified nursing assistants to dietitians, who work around the clock to oversee the outstanding patient care provided there.

By now, I am sure you are aware of the proposal put forth by the RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities (BHDDH). I wanted to express that Laborers' Local Union 808 is deeply committed to working with BHDDH to achieve its goals within this plan. Not only am I a representative for Laborers' Local 808, but I am also a 32 year employee for the State of Rhode Island at Zambarano Hospital and know first-hand the care and commitment this Unit has provided to Rhode Islanders and their families over the last century.

I have also chosen to live in the serene and picturesque community of Burrillville. With its beautiful lakes, natural woodlands and tranquil scenery, there is no better setting for individuals when in need of solace, rehabilitation or medical care. During my time at Zambarano I have had the pleasure to witness many extraordinary success stories with patients prospering by their stay. The care that is given is exemplary with its less restrictive environment than nursing homes and hospitals, as well as many group homes.

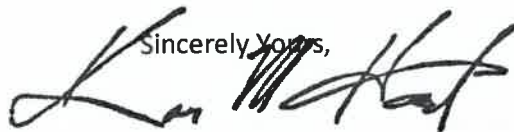
Our longtime history with the Rhode Island Department of Health and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services Agency (CMS) has always reflected the exemplary care we give our patients and our ability to provide for their ever-changing needs and medical care. Subsequently, the type of patients we have cared for over the years has significantly evolved from the elderly and developmentally disabled to those with multi-system failures. These patients need 24-hour physician coverage to assist with their numerous co-morbidities and medically complex health issues. This includes the critical, lifesaving rehabilitation services Zambarano provides; from its Adaptive Equipment Department, to its intensive speech, dietary and recreation therapies, to round-the-clock nursing assistant care to help patients with their hygiene, mobility and overall physical and psychological wellbeing.

The Zambarano Unit is further equipped with a dental office with a sterilization room. Podiatry services are provided as well. Specialized meals are made for the patients based on their diets. A behavioral specialist is on staff for first and second shift, and a hair stylist, pet and musical therapy are also provided.

Zambarano has been self-contained facility for years. It has its own power plant, as well as a waste water and drinking water plant. It has a new roof, windows, state-of-the-art cooling and heating system, and new generators. It is also equipped with a new fire suppression alarm system and oxygen system.

Not only would closing Zambarano be devastating for the thousands of Rhode Island families it currently serves and those would benefit in the future, but the state's local economy would also suffer tremendously. As you know, Zambarano Hospital is the major employer for the most northern part of the state. By closing the Unit, hundreds will lose their jobs, and the ripple effect on the local economy would be crippling.

Thank you for your attention regarding this matter, as the hard working men and women of Laborers' Local Union 808 look forward to working with you and BHDDH in meeting its goals at Eleanor Slater Hospital.

Sincerely Yours,


Karen Hazard
Business Manager